

Appendix 1

Maintained Schools Partnership Agreement September 2022 To August 2025

Review Date September 2023

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I. Introduction and Vision

1.1 The Maintained Schools (Partnership Agreements) (Wales) Regulations 2007

Section 197 of the Education Act 2002 requires local authorities to enter into a partnership agreement with the governing body of each school maintained by the Council (LA). The agreement details how the Council and the governing body of a maintained school will discharge their functions in relation to a school. The regulations impose duties upon all Councils and governing bodies of schools maintained by them to enter into Partnership Agreements.

The purpose of this Partnership Agreement is to facilitate the Council's vision and purpose for education. The agreement provides clarity about respective roles and responsibilities to enhance and sustain partnership working between the Council and its schools to raise standards and improve wellbeing. Should the parties be unable to agree a Partnership Agreement, the Council will draw up a statement setting out how the governing body and Council are to discharge their respective functions.

The Partnership Agreement as recommended by Welsh Government comprises several statutory and non-statutory functions. For ease of reference, the statutory functions are summarised at Appendix 1.

At the time of writing the world is responding to a pandemic of unprecedented scale. This document is written with this context, noting that many regulations are presently suspended in the light of the current circumstances, including performance reporting and school categorisation.

1.2 Purpose and Vision for Education

The Education Directorate's purpose is to deliver 'Better Schools. Better Communities and Better Citizens'. This is supported by a vision for education that was developed following extensive consultation with Headteachers, Governors and partners, the Council has agreed a vision for education as follows:-

'To secure excellent achievement and wellbeing through a partnership, school-led, self-improving, school to school, system approach'

The vision will be delivered through, effective and progressive partnership arrangements between the Council and its schools characterised by:-

- a primary focus on improving teaching and learning; improving progression and continuity between schools and reducing variation within and between schools,
- a collective commitment to secure wellbeing and reduce the impact of pupil deprivation and disadvantage,
- schools working collaboratively to support and challenge each other to achieve ambitious outcomes for all learners,
- school leaders, governors and the Local Authority sharing collective responsibility for the continuous improvement of schools.

This Partnership Agreement has been developed and reviewed by the Council following discussions with schools.

Organisational arrangements to support improved outcomes for learners are subject to regular review and refinement. However, the two agencies which underpin educational improvement are the Council as the democratically elected body with statutory powers for education and local schools with the obligation for delivery. These agencies are the parties to this Partnership Agreement.

At a regional level, Blaenau Gwent is part of the South East Wales Consortium (SEWC). In line with the requirements of the National Model for regional working the Education Achievement Service (EAS) is commissioned to deliver school improvement services. This Partnership Agreement reflects a shared understanding that initiatives will continue to be developed locally, through the EAS, in response to Welsh Government Regulations. This agreement also details the functions undertaken by the EAS on behalf of Blaenau Gwent Council, and the Council's expectations of the EAS.

This Partnership Agreement embodies the principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and seeks to embed the principles outlined in the March 2017 publication by the Children's Commissioner "The Right Way".

<https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/The-Right-Way.pdf>

In addition to the Local Authority functions defined as part of this agreement, there are a range of local authority services which are provided through service level agreements (SLA's) to schools. These services are optional for schools and are not detailed as part of this agreement. The only SLA obligation reflected in this agreement is the obligation for the Council to produce a schedule detailing the range and terms of any SLA offer and for schools to provide a clear response.

1.3 The Agreement

This agreement sets out how Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (the Council) and maintained School Governing Bodies will carry out their respective functions in relation to schools. The purpose of the agreement is to sustain and enhance partnership working between the Council and its schools in order to raise standards, improve wellbeing and deliver the Council's vision for education.

The Governing Body of a maintained school is responsible for the conduct and standards of the school. The Council shares responsibility for standards in schools, for school improvement (including the use of statutory powers of intervention), for the organisation of schools and for the overall provision of education services in Blaenau Gwent.

This Partnership Agreement applies to all maintained schools. Governing Bodies of Voluntary Aided and Foundation Schools will have additional responsibilities in relation to governance, admissions, staffing and buildings and will also have a relationship with a Diocese or Trust. These are reflected within the document.

1.4 The Essential Duties of the Partners.

Each maintained school is under the direction of its Governing Body

Partnership Responsibilities

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODIES IN CONSULTATION WITH THE SCHOOLS SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)	GOVERNING BODIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic management of education; • School improvement and tackling low achievement through:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Monitoring performance, , challenge, intervention and support; ○ Contribution to school improvement and management of national strategies; • Statutory functions in respect of Additional Learning Needs ; • Education welfare and education of excluded pupils and other pupils unable to attend school; • Statutory duty to provide Counselling for 11–18-year-olds including provision for year 6 pupils; • Provision of Youth Service; • Co-ordinate the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework • Access; • Strategic Planning of School Places – sufficiency, suitability and condition; • Strategic capital investment. 	<p>The Governing Body in consultation with the school's SLT should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the aims and values of the school; • Agree policies relating to the aims, purpose and practices of the school; • Consider and approve the School Development / Improvement Plans; • Ensure that the appropriate Curriculum is taught and that there are sufficient staff to teach it; • Monitor and review the schools progress; • Ensure individual pupils' needs are met, including additional needs; • Approve and monitor the expenditure of the budget of the school, taking corrective action as necessary; • Recruit and select staff and ensure effective arrangements for the management of staff; • Provide parents with information about the school; • Produce action plans for improvement following school inspections; • Establish and maintain positive links with the local business community and the wider community 	<p>Governing bodies of all schools must exercise their function with a view to fulfilling a strategic role in running the school.</p> <p>This includes a clear understanding of their statutory obligations as Governors to set and work toward a coherent School Development /Improvement Plan.</p> <p>The strategic framework should be established by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting aims and objectives for the school; • Adopting policies for achieving those aims and objectives; • Setting targets for achieving those aims and objectives. <p>Individual Governors have a responsibility to ensure that they have an understanding of the legislation and the role of the Governing Body and governors.</p> <p>The Governing Body should be ready to explain its actions and decisions to anyone who has a legitimate interest in the school</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Financial management (capital and revenue).• Engagement with SEWC to ensure effective direction of EAS to help raise standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote the effectiveness of the governing body• Support the day-to-day operational decisions taken by the Headteacher.	
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1.5 Categories of School and Respective Functions of the Governing Body.

The responsibilities of individual Governing Bodies for staffing, admissions and premises vary dependent upon the category of school as follows:-

Note -Throughout this agreement, whilst the school obligations detailed are the responsibility of the Governing Body to monitor and secure, it is acknowledged that the delivery process will require close and effective working between the Governing Body, Headteacher and the school Senior Leadership Team.

	Staffing	Admissions	School Premises and Capital
COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY SPECIAL	For schools with delegated budgets, the governing body is accountable for staff recruitment, pay, discipline and dismissal. Some obligations remain with the Council e.g. statutory redundancy pay.	Council	Premises owned by Council. Capital funding provided by Council.
VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED	As Community and Community Special Schools	Council	Premises held on trust by a foundation. Capital funding provided by Council.
FOUNDATION	Staff employed by governing body.	Governing Body	Premises held on trust by a foundation. Capital funding provided by Council.
VOLUNTARY AIDED	Staff employed by governing body.	Governing Body	Premises held on trust by a foundation. Capital funding provided by Council and or WG.

2. Achieving Excellence

2.1 Performance Summary - Agreeing Targets

Presently, there is no expectation upon school to produce targets. However, The Council may at a future date issue an addendum to the Partnership Agreement.

2.2 Pupil Progress

Historically there are a number of statutory performance indicators determined by the Welsh Government that must be reported on each year. These underpin the core functions of the Council to promote standards, continuous improvement and best practice. In addition, the Council has a number of local indicators used to monitor performance. However, presently the regulations relating to this have been suspended and the Council may issue an Addendum to this document at a future date.

The table below summaries the respective responsibilities of each partner.

Responsibilities for Pupil Progress

Council	Governing Body
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote standards, continuous improvement, best practice across all school, challenging underperformance where appropriate;• Facilitate training for governors and school staff on raising attainment and sharing good practice;• Promote school to school working and support, including Cluster Improvement Plans.• Through EAS, provide differentiated support, challenge and intervention to schools for raising attainment in line with the Council's policy and vision.• Monitor and work with partners to reduce the number of young people becoming NEET (Not in Education, employment or training) leaving Year 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuously monitor, discuss and analyses performance to review targets for improvement;• Ensure consistent focus on delivery of agreed school based targets.• Ensure that key personnel attend relevant timely professional development activities;• Publish school performance data via the school prospectus and Governors annual report to parents in line with statutory requirements,• Ensure that individual pupil data is shared with relevant school based staff using the appropriate electronic system in a timely manner.• Engage with school networks for improvement and actively contribute to the Cluster Improvement Plan.

2.3 Attendance

Schools and the Council will monitor attendance levels to improve pupil attendance. In discussion with schools, the Council will also monitor exclusion levels.

Responsibilities for Improving Attendance

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and discuss attendance data with schools to secure improvements to attendance levels; • Monitor discuss and analyses attendance data for schools on the Councils agreed electronic system; • Undertake register inspections in schools; • Provide advice to schools on attendance data and children missing education processes; • Facilitate training for governors and school staff on improving attendance; • Provide support, guidance and intervention for schools to improve attendance; • Implement statutory changes to the law e.g. fixed penalty notices; • To process requests for a transfer between schools in accordance with the timeframes prescribed in the School Admission Code; • To promote the need for and benefits of regular school attendance through the use of a BG marketing and publicity campaign; • To implement local authority guidance on emotionally based school avoidance. EPS will develop training packages for schools around this area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Council to ensure that governors have an understanding of attendance processes, legislation and their responsibilities by attending relevant training. • Monitor, discuss and analyses attendance data to support targeted interventions to raise attendance at a school level; • Implement Council and national policies in accordance with the prescribed timeframes. • To ensure that a pupil who transfers schools is enrolled without delay following admission following the admission notification from the Council. • To ensure that the council is notified promptly of all children that move out of the local authority without a destination school.

2.4 Exclusions

Schools and the Council will monitor exclusion levels, providing support and guidance of local and national responsibilities. For permanently excluded pupils the Council will work collaboratively with schools to ensure that suitable appropriate provision is provided.

Responsibilities for Reducing Exclusions

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training, advice and support on the correct use of the exclusion process and the promotion of alternative strategies to exclusion, including managed move meetings; • Support schools for the reduction of exclusions; • Support schools in carrying out managed moves as a recognised strategy for managing behavior • Support governing bodies in their consideration of exclusions and provide further support once the decision is made to exclude; • Collate and report exclusions statistics as required to the Welsh Government • Work with schools to better support early identification of children and young people with challenging needs and provide holistic support through safer schools approaches • Ensure that the hard to place protocol is followed for pupils returning to school following a permanent exclusion. • Work with school leadership teams where high levels of exclusions are identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Council to ensure that governors have a correct understanding of the use of exclusions and the procedures involved through relevant training. • Ensure that exclusions data is monitored regularly informed by school targets, and school arrangements to minimise exclusions are monitored effectively • Ensure that all incidents of exclusions are recorded immediately on the school's database and report all exclusions within one day to the Council's lead officer for Exclusions; • Ensure that accurate information is transferred to a pupil's new school via the agreed transfer system in accordance with relevant guidelines and timeframes set.

Targets For Learner Participation

As a result of the Pandemic and the relaxation of the requirement to set targets this section has been removed. However, the LA may issue an addendum should the position change.

2.5 Pupil Transition Arrangements

There is a transition policy in place to support children moving from pre-school provision into school nurseries. Staff from the pre-school setting and a representative from the relevant school will attend scheduled termly transition cluster meetings the half term before the child transitions to school to share information and documentation. These cluster meetings also offer the opportunity for pre-school settings to share information and documentation for children moving from Early Education place (3-4 year old provision) at that setting into an Early Education place at school.

Where a child has an Additional Learning Need, nursery school staff are invited to a Person Centered Planning meeting with the childcare setting and other involved professionals in the half term prior to transition and settling in visits are arranged.

Transition between Childcare settings and Foundation Phase settings for the purpose of Welsh Government's Childcare Offer

The Welsh Government Childcare Offer has been implemented in Blaenau Gwent since September 2017, The Offer for eligible parents is to have 30 hours of combined Early Education and childcare per/week The offer is available to parents of children from the term after their 3rd birthday, up until the September following their 4th birthday, up to 5 terms.. The responsibility of how and where the entitlement of the additional free childcare is taken lies with parents. Information on registered providers is offered by the Family Information Service and parents contract with the settings of their choice.

The key to successful and smooth transition between the Early Education placement and childcare setting and vice versa, for the purpose of the Childcare Offer, is maintaining good relationships between staff of both settings and the children. Strong relationships between settings will promote the children's wellbeing as it will ensure that children develop strong, secure attachments in both elements of their care and education and also receive consistently high levels of support at all times.

Responsibilities for Transition from Nursery to Primary

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish the Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education; • Facilitate the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Forum; • Administer the published Admissions arrangements, in line with the School Admissions Code (2013); • Publish and advise parents who have been refused a place, of their legal right to appeal and present the case for refusal at Appeals Panel hearings; • For community maintained schools, process school admission requests in accordance with the Council's admission policy within the required timeframes detailed within the Council's Policy; • Share admission/ pupil data and transfer information with schools; • Administer in-year transfers in line with the Council's Policy, ensuring the relevant processing timescales and requirements are met; • Provide training for Foundation Phase pedagogy and philosophy; • Provide skills progression documents for use by pre – school settings and schools to help providers evaluate progress of children; • Provide specialist support, advice and guidance to pre-school settings and schools for pupils with additional learning needs; • Provide a bespoke support package to registered providers to ensure all settings are given up to date personalised and professional development for practitioners relevant to their needs; and, Provide training, support and demonstrations for parents on a number of parent programmes to promote Basic Skills e.g. Language and Play and Numbers and Play. 	<p>Community Maintained schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide the Admissions team with up-to-date information on pupil movement out of the County Borough; • To provide the Admissions team with supporting information in line with admission appeals, whereby the team are arguing on behalf of the school; • To ensure the school develops best practice in transition • Provide information about the child, including interests and areas for development, to the relevant school; • Use pupil portfolios, if appropriate to individualise each pupils progress, including like and dislikes. • Monitor carefully transition between home and setting and between different settings to support everyone involved; • Liaise with registered Early Years nursery or preschool provider to secure Foundation Phase entitlement and clear transition plan; • Set up visits to build up personal relationships; • Invite parents to events; • Provide parents with information pack; • Establish links with feeder playgroups/flying start/ non-maintained settings; • Promote self-confidence and positive attitudes to learning in all children; <p>In addition to the above Governors of Foundation, Voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools must:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide timely admission information to the Council

Responsibilities for Transition from Primary to Secondary

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish the Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education; • Facilitate the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Forum and strategic support for voluntary aided and foundation arrangements; • Strategic management of school places; • Administer the published Admissions arrangements, in line with the School Admissions Code (2013); • Publish and advise parents who have been refused a place, of their legal right to appeal and present the case for refusal at Appeals Panel hearings; • For community maintained schools, process school admission requests in accordance with the Council's admission policy within the required timeframes detailed within the Council's Policy; • Share admission/ pupil data and transfer information with schools; Administer in-year transfers in line with the Council's Policy, ensuring the relevant processing timescales and requirements are met; • Work with clusters of schools to develop, monitor and review transition plans and practice to ensure transition is managed effectively; • Facilitate the transfer of performance, attendance and other appropriate information in order that secondary schools meet the needs of learners; • Support and develop curricular initiatives which create continuity of experiences for learners moving across phases and via the EAS professional learning offer to enable schools to access a range of programmes to support effective teaching and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide the Admissions team with up-to-date information on pupil movement out of County Borough; • To provide the Admissions team with supporting information in line with admission appeals, • Produce a transition plan in accordance with Welsh Government guidance; • Identify and develop cluster based models for transition as part of the School Development Planning process; • Ensure continuity and progression in the delivery and planning of the curriculum across key stages; • Ensure proper availability and use of pupil transfer data; • Identify and target specific support at those pupils considered to be vulnerable. • Ensure parents/carers are fully informed of the transfer process; • Monitor and evaluate the impact if improved transition arrangements on learners' progress and standards.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide targeted support through agreed plans in partnership the commissioned EAS where there are significant challenges in raising standards;• Use data tools such as the NEET Early Identification Tool to identify learners needing support and where appropriate provide additional support via Youth Service.	
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Responsibilities for Transition from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4.

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the EAS, work with schools, and other relevant agencies to coordinate the production of an options menu of 14-16 opportunities; • Support and develop curricular activities which create continuity of experiences for learners moving across phases and offer advice support to individual needs and priorities; and, • Provide targeted support where there are significant challenges in raising standards. • Use data tools such as the NEET Early Identification Tool to identify learners needing support and where appropriate provide additional support via Youth Service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make available a full options menu of qualifications and learning opportunities in line with statutory requirements; • Ensure effective arrangements to involve parents in discussion of options • Encourage the planning of an individual learning pathway for each pupil entering year 10 and have mechanisms in place to support and amend this pathway choice; • Ensure continuity and progression in the delivery and planning of curriculum across key stages; and, • Identify and target specific support at those pupils considered to be vulnerable.

Responsibilities for Transition from Key Stage 4 to Post 16 Provision.

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with schools, the FE sector and other relevant agencies to coordinate the production of a post 16 prospectus of opportunities on an annual basis; • Facilitate the Post 16 Partnership Board to enable positive transitions from school to Post 16 provision and to ensure appropriate curriculum choices are available. • Facilitate the Raising Aspirations Group to promote a preventative agenda to reduce levels of NEET; • Co-ordinate and implement the 6 key areas of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) which include Early Identification, Brokerage, Provision, Tracking, Employment and Skills and Accountability; • Work with post 16 providers including Coleg Gwent, Work Based learning providers (ACT and ITEC), Careers Wales and Regeneration's Shared Apprenticeship Scheme and STEM programme through the Post 16 Partnership Board and the Raising Aspirations Group to address identified gaps in provision and curriculum choice; • Provide links to updated post 16 opportunities and support for young people pre and post 16; • Use the Careers Wales 5-tiered system to identify learners needing additional support and co-ordinate support through the NEETs Practitioner Forum and Vulnerable Learner's Group; • Promote relationships between the school, careers' service and the pupil that is central to maintaining in education or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make available access for pupils in years 10 and 11 to independent careers advice and guidance. This should include collective information sessions on post 16 opportunities as part of delivered curriculum and one to one interviews with careers professionals at the request of the pupil; • Arrange access for all pupils to Careers Wales Online through school IT systems and local authority; • Arrange access for all pupils in year 10 and 11 to the full options menu at post 16 across the authority area which includes information on possible access routes to the FE sector and training providers; • Provide access to a trained Learning Coach for pupils as a source of guidance and learning support; • Encourage the planning of an individual learning pathway from each pupil from year 10 onwards and have mechanisms in place to support and amend the pathway choice; • Liaise with relevant agencies and the voluntary sector in identifying year 10 and 11 pupils unlikely to continue in education or training post 16 prior to the end of formal education and adopt strategies that forge links between these pupils and these groups; • Promote access to HE and FE institutions, training providers and employers through programmes of visits, careers fairs etc. and strive to provide pupils with the maximum amount of information on post 16 opportunities; • Work with other schools to share resources and improve access to post 16 opportunities.

<p>training particularly for those learners who are likely to reject formal learning post 16;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage post 16 providers to offer access to ongoing support and coaching for young people with the aim of improving retention or providing direction into better matched provision. 	
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2.6 Provision for Pupils with Additional Learning Needs

The Council will support schools in their statutory duty by providing advice and support, in line with the Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (ALNET) Bill 2018.

The Council has a responsibility to ensure that resources are being used effectively. It will work closely with schools in monitoring provision made for children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and ensuring full accountability for all resources.

The Council recognises that for some children with complex or profound needs, supplementary provision may be required either through a Statement of SEN or Individual Development Plans. Statements are for those with the most complex needs and these children are a small proportion of the totality of children with ALN. As the Welsh ALN legislation changes the obligations for pupils with additional or special needs, the Council will work in partnership with schools to ensure clear advice, training in new accountabilities, access to appropriate provision and professional support.

In partnership with schools, the Council will seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the impact of interventions in improving outcomes and wellbeing of pupils with ALN Opportunities for cluster-based initiatives to share resources and build capacity to enable school to school support will be pursued, developed and evaluated.

Responsibilities for Pupils with ALN

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will provide a clear policy framework for schools and will manage the support and placement of those pupils whose needs cannot be met in mainstream school; • The Council will agree arrangements to meet the needs of pupils with Additional Learning Needs. This will include appropriate strategies policies and professional learning to support schools; • The Council will provide advice and training to Schools on Welsh Government ALN policy, legislative change and Blaenau Gwent policies; • The Council will fulfil its statutory obligations regarding the outcomes of Education Tribunal Wales (ETW) appeals and secure appropriate provision. <p>The Council will promote:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access for all pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum which embraces the national agenda; • Challenging educational experiences of a high quality; • Defined teaching objectives with intended outcomes for each child, based on the early assessment of need; • A differentiated curriculum and in-class support ensuring that pupils receive high quality universal provision and targeted support; • Collaborative partnership working with other agencies; • Effective opportunities for parents to support their children with additional learning needs; and, • Cluster and school network-based solutions to build capacity and ALN provision; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce an ALN policy (statutory duty) and have due regard for the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales; • Meet their statutory responsibilities for Additional Learning Needs as identified through the ALNET Bill 2018; • Report to parents on the effectiveness of their ALN policy via the annual report to parents; • Ensure that the schools has an Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNco) who is aware of his/her duties and performs these accordingly; • Work collaboratively to secure effective partnership with other agencies and relevant stakeholders to provide inclusive and supportive environments which cater for individual children and young people's needs and offer them equal opportunity to reach their potential; • Operate a system for monitoring, evaluating and recording the progress of each child which is made available to all teachers who teach the child; • Ensure that any additional resource made available to the school to support pupils with complex additional learning needs is used effectively. • Explore cluster-based opportunities to share resources and enhance provision for pupils with ALN.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to services provided through the EAS and Pen-y- Cwm Inclusive Practice Services (IPS). | |
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3. Securing Wellbeing

3.1 Commitment to Secure Wellbeing and Whole School Approaches

Blaenau Gwent Council and all schools have signed up to a vision statement for education which includes a collective commitment to secure wellbeing.

Blaenau Gwent Council and schools recognise that the inclusion of a commitment to secure wellbeing as a core element of our vision statement for education represents a significant challenge. We accept that wellbeing and pupil progress are inextricably linked. In partnership with schools, the Council will seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the impact of approaches and interventions to promote children and young people's well-being.

The Blaenau Gwent aspiration for well-being is that:

“all children and young people are purposefully engaged in education which is appropriate to their needs and age. We want our children and young people to flourish and achieve positive outcomes for themselves, their families and our community. We want our children and our young people to be healthy, confident and capable and ready to learn throughout their lives. We want our children to be enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work”.

The following accountabilities have been drafted to reflect progress to date in developing our response to the many challenges involved in promoting, evaluating and monitoring wellbeing. However, a key accountability of the Council and governing body will be to continue to work together to identify, develop and implement the improvements necessary to secure wellbeing. Part of this commitment is fulfilled through the work of the Public Service Board Partners on improving the wellbeing of children and the importance that this is afforded in the assessment that the Board produces which is part of the agreement and collaborative commitment of the 5 ways of working as identified in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Responsibilities for Wellbeing

Council	Governing Body
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, in partnership with schools, a comprehensive strategy and advice to schools on measures to promote good wellbeing. <p>The Council will work with schools to create a Good Practice Guide for schools that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capture the extent of what is already being done to promote well-being across all aspects of school life; • analyse the quality of provision that is intended to promote well-being at a universal whole-school level as well as identify what is in place to support vulnerable groups and individuals; • Evaluate improvements in learner well-being using a range of qualitative and quantitative measures; • Regularly review arrangements to promote wellbeing in partnership with schools; • Provide bespoke wrap around services as required to support wellbeing e.g. Youth Service, Counselling Service, Families First, Healthy Schools and Educational Psychology Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work with the Council to develop policies and advice to establish arrangements to promote wellbeing • Ensure the school develops best practice to promote well-being • Secure effective partnership with parents and carers • Work with partners, agencies and wider stakeholders to secure effective practice in promoting well-being. • Identify and target specific support for pupils who are considered vulnerable • Operate a system which monitor and evaluates the impact of approaches and interventions to promote well-being • Work with the Council and school networks to develop initiatives to promote wellbeing.

3.2 Commitment to Safeguarding

All education providers must ensure that they have effective systems in place to Keep Learners Safe (KLS). This will be achieved by:

- creating a safe learning environment;
- identifying where there are child welfare concerns and taking action to address them, where appropriate, in partnership with other agencies; and,
- the development of children’s understanding, awareness and resilience through the curriculum.

The following accountabilities have been drafted to reflect the requirements that are set out in the Welsh Government Guidance “Keeping Learners Safe” 283/2022 March 2022 [Keeping Learners Safe \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/keeping-learners-safe)

Council	Governing Body
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that an appropriate senior officer is designated to have lead responsibility for discharging its safeguarding duties in education, with a particular focus on child protection <p>The Council has three levels of responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic • support and • operational responsibilities <p><u>Strategic responsibilities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all partners allocate resources to support the work of the regional safeguarding board, Gwent Safeguarding; • senior officers represent the authority on Gwent Safeguarding and that the authority makes an effective contribution to planning coordinated services to meet the needs of children; • work with other agencies to put in place and support effective partnership working • resources are allocated to enable the authority and maintained schools to discharge their responsibilities for safeguarding children satisfactorily; • effective liaison with the appropriate diocesan authorities in respect of arrangements for aided schools in the area; • monitor the compliance of maintained schools with KLS guidance, and bring any deficiencies to the attention of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing bodies are accountable for ensuring effective policies and procedures are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in accordance with this guidance, and monitoring its compliance with them. • Appoint a designated governor for safeguarding • Ensure that all staff, governors and volunteers complete the mandatory safeguarding training and refresher training • Ensure that DBS and relevant EWC registrations are in place in line with Policy for both staff and volunteers • Governing bodies must ensure that their organisation has effective safeguarding policies and procedures that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In accordance with local authority guidance, locally agreed interagency procedures and national minimum standards. ○ inclusive of services that extend beyond the school day ○ reviewed at least annually ○ made available to parents or carers on request ○ provided in a format appropriate to the understanding of children, particularly where schools cater for children with additional needs • operate safe recruitment procedures in line with local authority and KLS guidance

governing body of the school, advising upon the action needed to remedy them;

- resolve inter-agency problems as soon as they are identified;
- play a full part in child practice reviews, review and revise procedures where appropriate and disseminate information about relevant findings. Facilitate the Safer Schools Partnership Board;
- Continue to support the ongoing implementation and further development of My Concern software;
- Undertake quality assurance processes across all LGES settings to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and fit for purpose.

Support Responsibilities

- ensure that safeguarding training is delivered to all staff and available for governors.
- Safeguarding training which meets Gwent Safeguarding standards in interagency working is available to all relevant staff with responsibility for child protection.
- Maintain a record known as the safeguarding matrix to include KLS minimum data for schools and other data for all LGES settings.
- Provide model policies for child protection for schools in line with relevant guidance.
- Oversee the management of allegations of abuse and liaise with relevant agencies.
- Meet with schools Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSP's) on a termly basis.

Operational

- Follow Blaenau Gwent Safe recruitment guidance,
- safeguard and promote the welfare of children who have not been allocated a school place, or are excluded from school, including those being educated in out of county settings, alternative provision or via the home tuition service,
- seek to build effective relationships with home educators that function to

- Ensure the governing body reviews the schools policies and procedures annually and provide a copy of the self-evaluation to the Safeguarding in Education Manager during the first half of the autumn term
- Provide clear guidance to temporary staff and staff and volunteers providing guidance cover during short term absence on safeguarding arrangements
- Ensure that any deficiencies in child protection are rectified
- Observe the statutory child protection processes and procedures
- Review the safeguarding data on a termly basis to ensure compliance with safeguarding requirements to include training safe recruitment and policy adoption
- Provide termly updates or upon request on the safeguarding matrix, RPI data and race, rights equality (bullying returns) in line with agreed timescales. This should include nil returns as well.

safeguard the educational interests and welfare of children and young people,

- have in place arrangements for overseeing allegations of abuse against members of staff in the authority, schools and FE institutions in line with Safeguarding in Education: Handling Allegations of Abuse against School Staff (009/2014). For schools, the Welsh Government has issued guidance Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedures for School Staff). (002/202020) which includes a model policy,
- work with schools and partner agencies to ensure that allegations are dealt with quickly, fairly and consistently, and that appropriate referrals are made to the DBS and EWC,
- ensure that the authority's staff who work with children (including any staff carrying out functions on behalf of the authority) receive training that equips them to carry out their responsibilities for child protection effectively.

4. Partnership for Improvement

4.1 Collaboration to Deliver our Vision

The Council, its schools and the EAS are committed to working together to provide the highest standards of education in Blaenau Gwent. This entails developing new initiatives, reducing dependencies, demonstrating resilience and building upon our successes through partnership and innovation.

Responsibilities for Building Collaborative Networks

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage with EAS to collaborate, share resources and identify best practice.• Advocate and support initiatives which promote school to school working to build capacity within Blaenau Gwent and reduce dependency.• Promote and support school-based collaborations and sharing of resources.• Monitor, support and challenge School Improvement Plans.• Provide additional opportunities for linking schools with post 16 providers through the Raising Aspirations Group and Learning for Wellbeing Partnership.• Create and utilise Forums and Headteacher working groups to implement the Recovery and Renewal action plan and LGES self- evaluation processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support Headteacher and SLT proposals for collaborative working.• Regularly consider school initiatives to promote school to school support.• Consider SLT proposals to share resources and talent where this increases capacity and impact and reduce dependency.• Invite and explore opportunities to establish lead practitioner schools / departments as part of the school improvement model.• Positively challenge the SLT to create and champion cluster working and involvement in self-improving networks.• The Governing Body need to promote their understanding of the national drive in achieving a self-improving system across the education community.• Consider Cluster based Governor Collaborations.

5. Ensuring Delivery

5.1 Monitoring, Challenge, Support and Intervention.

The Council has a statutory role in monitoring the quality of education provision and standards of performance in all educational establishments. In 2012, the Council commissioned the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to deliver these functions to schools on their behalf. Whilst the EAS has no statutory responsibilities, it undertakes a broad range of school improvement activities on behalf of the statutorily accountable Council and is commissioned and funded in part by the Council to contribute to the raising of standards wellbeing in accordance with the Council's vision. The EAS produces, in collaboration with the Local Authority a business plan and an annex with specific priorities pertaining to Blaenau Gwent on an annual basis. The plan is agreed by the Council. However, since the publication of the last Partnership Agreement many of the national accountability frameworks including school categorisation have been removed.

The Council, through the EAS will support schools' self- evaluation and improvement through a differentiated and bespoke programme, which includes Professional Discussion sessions ,Team Around the School approaches and formal intervention arrangements. The EAS and Council, working in partnership with schools, play a key role in monitoring the quality of education provision and standards of performance and in providing support necessary to improve the school and achieve the Council's vision for Education. This process will be school led and will feature school to school support and cluster collaboration where this adds value.

However, the Council has a statutory responsibility for intervening where necessary; when the school presents as a cause for concern, where there are concerns about school standards and/or leadership, or where urgent health and safety issues are apparent. The School Standards Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 details the eight grounds for intervention.

Where the Council is satisfied that one or more of Grounds 1 to 6 exist, the authority may give a warning notice to the governing body of the school which the governing body has a statutory duty to accept. Further where ground 7 or 8 applies the Council has the power to intervene in order to bring about the required improvement.

The use of these statutory powers is applied in exceptional circumstances. Moreover, the Council's statutory role of monitoring will be effectively discharged through professional dialogue, close partnership work with the school, the commissioned EAS, and in the case of schools with a religious character, the relevant Diocesan Director of Education.

Responsibilities for School Standards

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will agree strategic priorities that will be included in the Education Improvement Plan (EIP) and EAS Business Plan; • Monitoring of progress towards agreed targets; • Evaluation of school documentation as appropriate to the monitoring activity; • Evaluation of a range of reports from agencies such as Estyn and audit reports as and when required; • Commissioning whole school reviews in collaboration with the school/ Governing Body to identify a baseline and / or review areas requiring improvement and provide support • Agreeing a programme of Council commissioned targeted support in individual schools which is proportionate to success; • Promoting a programme of professional development for practitioners and school leaders this is the professional Learning Offer from the EAS; • Implement the agreed Regional Schools Causing Concern Policy • Promote school to school improvement networks and initiatives which reduce dependence on Council and EAS support - see above comment linked to building capacity and resilience • Ensure that the WASPI agreement that is in place with the EAS facilitates the safe and lawful sharing of school data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop effective self – evaluation and monitoring processes as a means of identifying strengths and areas of improvement; • Discuss and evaluate aspects of school provision with Officers and Improvement Partners; • Plan in detail the actions required to address areas in need of improvement, implement and monitor the action plan; • Monitor, review and update the School Improvement plan on a regular basis to reflect the self-evaluation process; • Provide timely data for relevant audiences/ meetings. • Attend meetings at the request of the Corporate Director; • Evaluate the performance of all staff, including induction arrangements for newly qualified teachers; • To provide in an electronic format all policies and key documents in a timely manner to the Council in accordance with the list published by Estyn. • Consider and develop proposals which enhance opportunities for school-to-school support and collaboration where this enables the sharing of good practice and effective deployment of resources. • Encourage school participation in the cluster improvement plan and other self-development networks which reduce dependence on Council and EAS support.

5.2 Identifying and Responding to Schools Causing Concern.

The Council has a duty of care for all its schools and will provide support for its schools relative to their need. This will necessitate a differentiated programme of support, delivered in partnership with the school and EAS and supportive of identified needs. This work is commissioned through the EAS.

The Council and EAS are mindful of the criteria provided by Estyn through the inspection framework relating to schools causing concern and of its duties as described in legislation for schools in need of significant improvement and schools requiring special measures and the specific arrangements for managing schools causing concern.

Support the Council will offer to schools giving cause for concern.

The Council has agreed a regional EAS Schools Causing Concern Policy which details the arrangements governing the Council's work with schools causing concern and this forms part of the response i.e. Team Around the School (TAS) approach. This is aligned to the Welsh Government statutory guidance for schools and local authorities in respect of schools causing concern.

As such, the full implementation and close monitoring of, the School's Intervention Plan (or support plan, or Post Inspection Action Plan dependent upon the circumstances and category of support required) is a central feature of the work that the school, the Council and EAS will undertake to secure the required improvement. Intervention Plans are required when the school is judged to be a school that is presenting as a cause for concern (SCC/TAS) and significant improvement or special measures are required either as recognised by Estyn or by the Council and EAS. The intervention plan is agreed by the Local Authority and is monitored through regular meetings with the Headteacher, Chair of Governors, PSIP and Corporate Director of Education (or his representative) as well as by the Executive Member for Education in the Council.

The regionally agreed policy for Schools Causing Concern guides operational activity and support for schools presenting as in need of support.

When a school is identified by Estyn and needing Special Measures, a Multi agency approach will be implemented to ensure that the school makes progress at a sufficient pace to ensure that it is removed from a category.

Responsibilities are set out below:

Responsibilities for Schools presenting as a Cause for Concern:

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure all schools fully understand the nature and extent of support they will receive in order for them to improve. Support may be through a Multi-Agency for Schools in Special Measures or a Team Around the School approach. Regional policies will guide all activity in this area of work. • Assist the school's Governing Body and Headteacher in drawing up the action plan and approve the action plan prior to its submission to Estyn. This may be a Post Inspection Action Plan, an Intervention Plan or a Support Plan as appropriate. • These plans will set out the nature and extent of support to be provided by the EAS, the LA and other providers. It will include the LAs plans of support for the school. It will detail the monitoring schedule which will be for every half term. • The SIP will produce a progress report on behalf of the LA prior to any Estyn re-visit • The SIP will update the Plans and provide up-dated progress report to the Director of Education • The Corporate Director of Education or his representative will work closely with the SIP to coordinate LA based support such as Finance, HR, Governor Support, premises and ALN. • The Multi Agency Meeting or TAS will monitor the progress made in addressing the concerns raised for individual schools. • The Council may consider using its powers of intervention in order to improve the school. Should this be the case, the Council will advise the school in writing that statutory powers to address the needs of a school causing concern are to be invoked, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with LA and EAS to produce an effective improvement plan which will be reported to the full Governing Body. • Explore options to build capacity including school to school support or the sharing of resources in accordance with the Council's vision. • Establish a rigorous monitoring system to ensure that the action plan is operational with the agreed timescales and the school makes the required progress. • Provide regular updates in line with the Plan to the LA on progress made, identifying any barriers to the successful implementation of actions to achieve the desired outcomes. • The Chair of Governors and Headteacher will attend regular meetings to evidence progress that is being made. • Should the Council issue either a Pre-Warning Notice or a Warning Notice to Improve to the Governing Body of a school and implement certain interventions, the Governing Body will comply with the conditions as set out in the Pre/ Warning Notice. • The Chair of Governors shall make all school Governors aware of the Pre / Warning Letter and its full contents. The Chair of Governors will make all school Governors aware of the interventions that the Council is invoking. The Governing Body shall comply with all interventions as listed.

explaining reasons and actions. As appropriate the Council may use a Pre-Warning Notice to formally notify the school of its intentions should the required improvements not be made within the timescale prescribed by the LA.

- Should statutory powers of Council intervention be implemented, the Council will monitor progress half termly via the agreed process. The Council will lift the conditions pertinent to the Warning Notice when the required improvements have been made by the school. The Council will inform the school and Governing Body in writing when the Warning Notice letter is to be lifted.
- The Corporate Director of Education shall meet all school Governors to fully explain the contents of the Pre/Warning Letter to Improve

6. Managing Resources

6.1 Finance

The Council's Scheme for Financing Schools provides details of the underlying principles for the local management of schools. The document covers the financial and managerial responsibilities of governing bodies and the Council in accordance with the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010.

Section 4 of the scheme confirms how surplus and deficit budgets are dealt with. The details behind the specific guidance outline in the Scheme for financing schools, including financial regulations and standing orders, form part of this partnership agreement to ensure the Council and its schools work closely to identify and resolve any emerging financial problems/ issues.

School Budgets with Surplus Balances

Officers from Corporate Resources work closely with any school holding a balance which is in excess of the maximum detailed within the Scheme for Financing Schools, which is presently 5% of the school budget share. This involves each school with an excessive balance receiving a formal letter requesting plans of the intended use of the surplus.

Once approved, plans are monitored through the year by the Director of Education, Director of Finance and Chief Accountant. Failure to comply with the direction to spend could result in the claw back of the excess balance. The capped figures for claw back are:

- Primary £50,000
- Secondary and Special School £100,000
- Middle £150,000

Following the claw back of any funds from a school the Chief Finance Officer and Corporate Director for Education will consult the Schools Budget Forum as to how the funds should be spent and will then allocate funds with effect from the end of the financial year.

Ever since the Covid 19 pandemic started schools have not been asked to submit plans for spending excessive balances. This is because of the financial uncertainty that has existed as a result of the pandemic."

School Budgets with Deficit Balances

The Governing Body must set a budget by 31st May each year. Where a school is unable to set or balance a budget, the Council will work closely with the governing body and Headteacher to provide appropriate advice, guidance and support to ensure that it is able to plan appropriately to bring the budget back in balance. This support may come from a range of professionals including Finance, HR and or School Improvement. Whilst this Partnership Agreement is viewed as fundamental to successfully managing difficult budget situations, legal responsibility for the management of the schools budget remains with the governing body, in accordance with the Education Reform Act 1988.

Circumstances might occur when a governing body finds itself in a situation where despite the advice and support referred to above, it is still unable to balance its budget. In these instances the governing body is required to submit an agreed

Budget Recovery Plan for approval by the Corporate Director of Education and Chief Finance Officer. Should this occur the Council will continue to work closely with the school to enable them to bring the budget back to balance. Should the budget remain in deficit the Council will consider the use of alternative measures such as warning notices and in extreme cases, the withdrawal of delegation.

Responsibilities for School Finance

Council	Governing Body
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce, maintain and update a Scheme for School Financial Management. • Undertake Section 151 responsibilities to ensure financial probity in all financial matters at school level. • Establish appropriate arrangements to monitor school finances and transactions. • Ensure arrangement to train governors in their financial management accountabilities. • Trigger interventions in accordance with the relevant Scheme in response to any breach of that Scheme or the Council's Financial Regulations. • Approve and monitor as necessary School budget recovery plans. • Provide a schedule and costs for optional services provided under Service Level Agreements. • Through SIP visits and electronic systems, monitor and evaluate the impact of grant spend on pupil outcomes and wellbeing. • Keep governors informed of school performance and school performance priorities across the LA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure compliance with the Council's Scheme for School Financial Management and Financial Regulations. • Agree, minute and set a balanced budget for the school by 31 May in accordance with the relevant regulations. • Seek advice and support where necessary to secure a balanced budget. • Ensure external advice on pay progression in relation to SLT members and that national pay requirements are adopted. • Ensure regular reports on financial performance of the school are reported to the full Governing Body. • Support the Headteacher and SLT in pursuing opportunities for cluster or school network proposals to pool budgets, share resources and build capacity in accordance with the Education vision of the Council. • Consider and determine those Council services which will be purchased through SLA, including staffing and Health and Safety implications. • Ensure compliance with the Councils procurement framework.

6.2 Premises and Buildings

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to ensure a safe and secure working environment for school staff and pupils; as detailed in Section 40, schedule 13 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998. The Control of School Premises (Wales) Regulation 2008 set out the arrangements for the control of school premises.

In delivering our vision for education and promoting wellbeing we are clear that School premises must be viewed as a resource not only for pupils but for the wider community. The role of schools is an integral to community provision. Schools are expected to promote and maximise availability for community use; including continued use and further development of school buildings within the local community to cost effectively increase levels of community activity. The Council and schools will seek out opportunities to develop their community role. This will help improve pupils' attainment and instill a sense of ownership and engagement with the school amongst parents/ guardians, carers and the wider community.

The Council and schools will give priority to activities that support and promote pupils' learning, health and well-being and that of the wider community generally. Examples include: sporting activities, homework and after-school clubs/other study support activities, basic skill development sessions / courses, adult education, youth service activities and family learning opportunities.

The Council also encourages multi-agency use of school facilities in each community so that adults, children and young people will have better access to local services such a primary health, social services, childcare, early learning and other leisure and community learning activities.

Responsibilities for Premises

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic and operational investment into the school estate- both capital and revenue; • Monitoring the effectiveness of the school estate, particularly with reference to changes to: school capacity calculations and plans in terms of room usage and development; management of surplus and sufficiency issues in line with the provision of pupil places; suitability and condition of premises; and, facilities management in terms of repairs, maintenance, Health and Safety/ Fire Risk Assessment action planning and resolution; • Producing, reviewing and administering the Division of Responsibilities Guidance and TE100 process, linked to ensuring appropriate financial accountability for property maintenance- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control over the occupation and use of the school premises for all categories of school, both during and outside of school hours (subject to any provisions of a school's trust deed conferring rights on trustees or others). This does not include caretaker houses; • Developing arrangements to make premises available for community use outside of school hours; • Seeking Council advice on transfer or control agreements giving third parties control of premises to promote community use; • Recognise the legal right of the Council to make directions in accordance with Council policies about community use; • Comply with the Councils' policy for the use of and charging for school premises.

<p>along with the timely resolution of property-based issues;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking annual facilities reviews in informing minor and planned work programming; • Provision of directions and advice about the use of school premises, • Provision of health and safety advice and monitoring; • Managing school capacities, planning reductions of surplus places to reflect pupil projections and to ensure sufficiency of school places; • Support the engagement of partners such as Early Years providers in Community Schools; • Seeking to avoid any conflict with activities already planned by the school for that academic year; • Issue any tenancy agreements and or licenses to occupy premises as required; and, • Support in the drafting of agreements for the use of school premises; • The EAS will provide curriculum specific advice on health and safety matters such as science practical's. 	
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Repairs and Maintenance of School Premises

School premises and building stock must be maintained to an acceptable level in order to complement education provision and ensure an effective and appropriate teaching and learning environment. Where a significant improvement is made to a school and/ or additions to a building or school site, capital monies prioritised and allocated by the Council may assist. For maintenance and repair work, guidance on responsibilities is detailed in the document on division of responsibilities between the local authority and schools.

Responsibilities for School Repair and Maintenance

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing, reviewing and administering the Division of Responsibilities Guidance and TE100 process, linked to ensuring appropriate financial accountability for property maintenance - along with the timely resolution of property-based issues; • Undertaking annual facilities reviews in informing minor and planned work programming; • Facilities management in terms of Health and Safety/ Fire Risk Assessment action resolution; • Provide clear advice on School obligations for property maintenance; • Provide advice and support to schools on the expenditure and management of their delegated budget for property maintenance; • Manage, monitor, deliver and inform the direction of future capital investment into the school estate, via both the Council's Capital Programme and Welsh Government's 21ST Century Schools Programme; • To undertake a rolling programme of condition surveys also assessing suitability of buildings; • Issue specific advice on School Asbestos Management, ensuring Asbestos Registers are in place, communicated and monitored. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be aware of the Governing Body's responsibilities for maintenance as detailed in the Council's division of responsibility document. • Responsibility for all repairs as detailed in the division of responsibility document; • Ensuring that emergency repairs are dealt with promptly to prevent the problem from escalating and costs rising; • To undertake routine building maintenance to secure acceptable standards of accommodation for teaching and learning; • To maintain the asbestos register and to ensure that all staff and contractors are made aware of the asbestos register; • Ensuring contractors sign the asbestos register before undertaking any work; • To consult the Council before progressing any proposals for new build or structural change to the school premises; • To advise the Council in the event of a caretaker's house becomes vacant or the caretaker's contact terminating.

6.3 Providing, Maintaining and Using Data

The Council will provide services working in partnership with schools and outside agencies to promote the effective and efficient use of Capita SIMS and the provision of support for both statutory and non-statutory data.

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to advice on compliance with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts; • Provision of advice and support to schools on the use of Capita SIMS and EMS; • Provision of data via the s2s website; • Advice on hardware specification requirements to host SIMS software; • Installation of Capita Sims/ EMS / My Concerns upgrades and patches as required; • The administration and management of performance data; • The administration of standardised assessment programme(s); • Compliance with Data Protection Act and freedom of Information for all data that is held by the Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the School complies with any statutory obligations relating to information or data e.g. Data Protection Act, freedom of Information Act; • As part of its compliance with GDPR and Data Protection legislation ensure that the school has an appointed Data Protection Officer; • Ensure the school enters and maintains all pupil data in a secure, timely and accurate manner on the school information management system to include LAC and ALN status and religion, ethnicity and language data; • At least annually and upon admission to the school to verify with parents/ guardians pupils' personal details including legal and preferred names and maintain accurate addressed (pupils and other contacts); • Ensure anti-discriminatory monitoring and analysis by minority group type (e.g. religion, ethnicity, language); • Ensure the school maintains its computer systems taking reasonable precautions against malicious software hackers. This includes using only software which is current, supported by its supplier and properly licensed.

6.4 Supporting Staff Development to achieve School Improvement and High Standards.

As part of its regular programme of work and in conjunction with the EAS, the Council will monitor and support effective staff development and performance management. The Council is clear that the quality of support to develop the quality of teaching and learning is a fundamental aspect of the school improvement agenda. Whilst the prime responsibilities for development rest with the Governing Body, the Council and EAS also have a role in promoting school to school sharing of best practice, helping schools and clusters to create effective development opportunities and being consistent in their commitment to build self-reliant and self-improving networks of schools.

Responsibilities for Staff Development

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure effective performance management arrangements are in place for all Headteachers; • Through the EAS, support schools through grants and other resources to identify staff development needs and to plan professional development; • Through SIP visits and electronic systems, monitor and evaluate the impact of grant spend on pupil outcomes and wellbeing; • Provide schools with authority wide performance priorities and strategic objectives to secure further improvement e.g. reduce the Fsm/ non Fsm achievement gap, improve L2+, reading, writing and maths in combination and standards in KS3 and KS4; • Through the EAS, offer professional development opportunities through the Professional Learning Offer and bespoke packages; • Keep governors informed of school key issues through a range of media; • Liaise with schools and the EAS to secure an appropriate level of delegated grant funding for schools; • Ensure all schools are aware of any LA performance objectives through regular discussion at Headteacher meetings; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use performance management and other systems to identify training needs, including those for the Headteacher; • Explore and establish relevant cluster based or wider staff development opportunities; • Ensure all staff have opportunities within and beyond the school to access best practice and to develop their skills and knowledge; • Ensure that all staff have access and support for professional development; • Support appropriate professional development of teachers and all school staff at all stages of their careers; • Evaluate the impact of all staff development on school improvement, standards and value for money Provide opportunities for dissemination of skills and expertise derived from staff development.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure schools are kept up to date with regional development opportunities;• Provide opportunities for sharing and promotion of best practice between schools;• Provide a range of support and development programmes to support the inclusion agenda via the ALN development programme;• Provide opportunities for Headteachers and school staff at all levels to participate in professional career development including early intervention strategies and catch up;• Use evaluations to inform future developments;• Celebrate achievements at a local, regional and national level. | |
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6.5 Governing Body Training, Support and Reports.

Although the governing body of a maintained school is responsible for the conduct and standards of the school, the Council shares responsibility for standards and discharges strategic responsibilities for the overall provision of education services within Blaenau Gwent. In discharging some of its Governors Support functions the Council commissions the EAS to fulfil the delivery of the Governor Support service.

Governing bodies need, therefore, to have regard to the roles and responsibilities of the Council in the way in which they conduct themselves and in the decisions that they take.

Responsibilities for Governor Support and Training

Council	Governing Body
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council commissions the EAS to undertake the governance duties on its behalf; • Provide advice and guidance to governing bodies on their role and responsibilities in respect of the discharge of their duties and aligned to identified training needs; • Provides appropriate bespoke support and challenge for all schools; • Support Governors in the development of school-to-school support and self-improving Governor networks; • Maintain and shares sources of best practice via publications; • Devise and coordinates an annual governor training programme that includes the mandatory element of induction, chair, clerk and data sessions where necessary as well as legislative updates and topical issues as identified in the BG governor training needs; • Recruits, trains supports and performance manage all clerks to governing bodies; • Supports the Council's Governors Association and termly governor meetings with the Director and their representatives; • Facilitates termly joint meeting with Governors with the EAS and LA; • Facilitates all LA and parent governor recruitment and appointment processes; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider how Governors can best contribute to the life of the school and ensure progress and identify the knowledge and skills which will support their development; • Build relationships with cluster and network Governors to share experiences and good practice; • Identify the skills and abilities needed by the Governing body to fulfil their obligations under this Partnership Agreement through the self-evaluation toolkit; • Ensure appropriate governing body consideration of their obligations as detailed in this Partnership Agreement including performance, wellbeing, financial management, pay policy and complaints procedures; • To promote attendance of governors at training courses and where training is mandatory ensure that all relevant governors undertake this training with the agreed parameters; • To ensure that appropriate agenda items and documents are received in accordance with the timeframes prescribed by the EAS governor support function; • As part of self-evaluation identify training needs of individual governors and the governing body as a whole and arrange support/ training as appropriate;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes governing bodies, prepares and updates the instrument of government; Ensures the effective recruitment of LA governors through the LA appointment procedures; • Ensures appropriate arrangements are in place to facilitate DBS checks; • Maintains a record of attendance at training and development events; • Enable governing bodies to undertake annual self-evaluation of its performance and impact in order to further improve governance; • Provides advice and support in respect of legal issues as requires. Where the advice is not taken the governing body are responsible for any resultant costs; • Seeks to maintain a very low governor turnover rate; • Ensures that all secondary and middle schools have an associate pupil governor on the governing body • To liaise with diocesan Authorities re specific areas of governance in the Voluntary Aided and Controlled schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the induction of new governors; • Ensure that the attendance / disqualification of governors is managed in accordance with regulations; and • Notify the LA of the named governors for ALN, Health and Safety, Safeguarding and governor training; • Must provide termly updates on safeguarding training for governors and DBS / volunteer compliance.
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Responsibilities for Governing Body Reports

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise schools of required reports and timescales including budget plans, any targets and exclusion/disciplinary findings; • Provide governing bodies with a written annual report on standards; • Provide Governing Bodies with Education policy and strategy consultation documents with clear advice on timescales for responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governing body must provide the following reports to the Council on the discharge of its function: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signed minutes for all meetings of the full governing body and all committees, statutory and non-statutory, ▪ Targets as agreed for pupil performance and attendance, ▪ School self-evaluation, ▪ School Development/Improvement plan, ▪ Annual finance report, ▪ Annual Health and Safety report, ▪ Private fund account statement, ▪ Governors annual report to parents, ▪ Post inspection action plan following Estyn inspection, ▪ Governing bodies must make available to the Council on request copies of all statutory and non-statutory policies and document (full list Governors Wales website), ▪ Information regarding any incidents that have to be recorded e.g., racial, substance misuse, rights respect equalities, bullying, RPI, safeguarding (including child protection) data, • The governing body must respond to written concerns raised by the Council regarding the performance of the school or the Headteacher and notify the Council of any action the governing body proposes to take consideration of such reports.

6.6 School Staff Appointments, Redundancies, Managing Staff Attendance, Complaints and Disciplinary Matters.

For Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher appointments, the Corporate Director of Education or their representative is entitled to attend relevant meetings of the selection panel to offer professional advice and consideration of their availability should be a key consideration when agreeing dates. The governing body has an obligation to consider the Director's advice before making a decision. The school's School Improvement Partner will also be in attendance to offer professional advice and challenge to the selection panel. The selection panel has an obligation to consider this advice.

Accountabilities for Recruitment and Selection.

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce guidance on appointment of Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and other school base staff appointments, • Receive notification of Headteacher vacancies and discuss options with Governing Body, • Allocate professional support to Governing Body for HT appointments, • Offer advice to the Governing Body regarding recommended HT appointments in advance of any decision being confirmed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply Council Guidelines for staff recruitment, • Notify the Director of Education of any Headteacher or Senior Leadership Team vacancy, • Consider all options and opportunities to respond to the vacancy before replacement, • Ensure involvement of the Director of Education or his/her representative in any Headteacher recruitment process, • Ensure Job description and Person Specification reflects the Council's vision for Education and the commitment to a self-improving school system, • Ensure that all posts are advertised, • Ensure involvement of at least one Governor trained in recruitment, • Adhere to the advice of the Corporate Director of Education and his/ her representative.

The Corporate Director/representative, Organisational Developments representative and the school's School Improvement Partner will attend all selection panel meetings that involve short listings and interviews. In the case of voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools a representative from the appropriate Diocesan Office will also attend these meetings.

Council’s Role in School Staff Redundancies

Redundancy funding is not delegated to schools; the funding of redundancy payments and pension release costs are subject to arrangements outlined in the School’s redundancy Policy including:

- A genuine redundancy situation
- The governing body following their school policy and the advice of council officers
- Approval of the Corporate Redundancy Panel.

The Council's Organisational Development team will provide advice and guidance to Governing Bodies and members of staff prior to, during and following a redundancy situation arising. This will include advice on the application of Schools Redundancy Policy if adopted by the Governing Body.

Organisational Development will liaise with all schools to seek suitable alternative employment for employees under notice of redundancy.

The Council will support the governing body prior to and at employment tribunal stage where necessary, to include Human Resources and Legal services support providing their advice has been adhered to. In the case of voluntary aided and foundation schools where the governing body are the employer, the Council will liaise with the relevant authority.

Responsibilities for Managing Redundancy

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a redundancy policy • Issue advice on the handling of redundancies, • Promote opportunities for redeployment across schools • Ensure corporate requirements to consult recognised Trade Unions are delivered, • Ensure training of Governors. • Authorise Redundancy decisions and payments where appropriate • Ensure availability of professional officer support, • Promote opportunities for cluster based responses to budget challenges where this can avoid compulsory redundancies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the Council advice on redundancy handlin, • Adopt a school policy for managing redundancy following consultation with recognised trade unions, • Fulfil statutory employer obligations to consult trade unions at an early stage to seek to avoid redundancy, • Ensure fair and transparent processes for redundancy selection, • Ensure access to appropriate professional advice, • Consider cluster-based solutions to avoid redundancy.

Complaints and Disciplinary Matters

All schools will seek specific Council advice on complaints and disciplinary matters in the following instances;

- all complaints which are potentially of a safeguarding / child protection nature;
- all disciplinary matters which could necessitate the suspension of a member of staff;
- all disciplinary matters which could potentially be gross misconduct;
- any disciplinary or capability matter which relates to the Headteacher or other school-based staff;
- all complaints and disciplinary matters which move to the stage of being heard by the governing body i.e. Stage B where complaints are progressed to the Chair of Governors;
- Organisational development may attend as the Directors representative meetings of the Staff Disciplinary and Dismissal and Appeal Committee to provide advice to the Committee in accordance with the statutory guidance contained within Welsh Government Circular no 002/2020;
- Foundation, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools will also need to liaise with the relevant body.

Managing Staff Attendance

All employees of the school have a role to play in minimizing their own sickness absence. The primary responsibility for monitoring and controlling absence on a day-to-day basis in schools rests with Headteachers.

Responsibilities for Managing Sickness Absence

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and review policies and consult with Trade Unions prior to the implementation of any changes; • Arrange appropriate training for all Headteachers/ Line Managers involved in the management of attendance; • Promote Occupational Health initiatives; • Provide advice and support to the Headteacher and the Governing Body where appropriate on the management of sickness absence cases; • Ensure availability of professional Officer support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a school policy for managing sickness absence; • Consider the Council advice on managing sickness absence; • Consider how absence from the classroom might impact on the formulation and implementation of the SDP; • Ensure that at full governing body meetings, the Headteacher's report for Governors includes an item on staff attendance so that implications for learners and expenditure on cover can be considered; • Ensure the Headteacher is effectively implementing healthy working practices and discharging any statutory responsibilities in relation to achieving a satisfactory work life balance for all staff; • Ensure there is a Disciplinary and Dismissal panel and a Disciplinary and Dismissal Appeals Panel available to deal with disciplinary action linked to poor

	<p>attendance or ill health dismissals linked to long term sickness absence;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend attendance management training and/or disciplinary training offered by the Local Authority or EAS.
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Responsibilities for Complaints and Disciplinary Matters

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of advice and guidance in the application of the disciplinary procedures, schools' complaints procedure and Welsh Government Guidance on Complaints; Provision of advice and guidance on the investigatory process; this is provided via the EAS governor services in respect of complaints under the school's complaints procedure and at stage B; Provide guidance, advice and training on the protocols relating to allegations of a safeguarding nature; Organisational development attends (as the Director's representative) at disciplinary hearings/ meetings of the staff disciplinary and dismissal committee (and disciplinary and dismissal appeals committee) to provide advice to the disciplining officer/ committee where requested/ appropriate; Support the school prior to and at employment tribunal stage where necessary, to include Organisational development and legal support provided their advice was adhered to; The Council will work with all other relevant bodies in respect of voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish complaints procedure, Ensure all parents and pupils are made aware of and are able to access the schools' complaints procedure; Produce a school Disciplinary Procedure; Ensure participation in appropriate Training by Governors; Fulfil employer obligation for triggering Disciplinary Procedures; Ensure access to and consideration of professional advice in dealing with disciplinary procedures; Ensure Director of Education is notified of any potential disciplinary or capability matter involving the Headteacher; Ensure early advice concerning which Governors should or should not be involved in the investigation of any disciplinary matter to ensure availability of "untainted" Governors to deal with final stage procedures and appeals; Ensure that there is a robust school safeguarding policy; Refer any potential safeguarding issue to the Corporate Director of Education at the earliest opportunity.

6.7 Health and Safety (to include health, safety, welfare and fire safety herein referred to as health and safety)

The Council and the school Governing Body have responsibilities to ensure the Health Safety of all pupils, staff and visitors to the school. The Council has a Corporate Health and Safety policy and each school also has a Health and Safety policy which details arrangement and accountabilities to secure a healthy and safe learning environment.

Accountabilities for Health and Safety

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will take all reasonable steps to meet its legal duties paying particular attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring workplaces, equipment, articles and substances are safe and without risks to health; ▪ Ensuring appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision is provided • The Corporate Director of Education has overall responsibility for health and safety in schools and is responsible for ensuring that schools and Governing Bodies are supported to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, eliminate or manage hazards/ risks • Record and investigate all accidents and dangerous occurrences to prevent recurrence, • Ensure agreed remedial actions are implemented and monitored, • Access specific Health and Safety train in • Establish effective emergency procedures • The Council will support the accreditation and training of Employee Safety Representatives; • The annual School Health and Safety report will be received, considered and responded to as necessary and shared with Governors in a timely manner; • The Council will make available to schools an appointed person to 	<p>School Governing Bodies share, with the Council, responsibility for Health and Safety. Governors are required to establish Health and Safety Policies and Procedures including the adoption and implementation of a school Health and Safety Policy Statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statement should address arrangements to ensure the health and safety of all pupils, staff, contractors and visitors to the school, also the health and safety of pupils, staff and others involved in school visits, trips and events; • The Governing Body is required to conform to the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and subsequent health and safety legislation and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005; • Ensure that appropriate Health and Safety Policies and Procedures are in place in relation to their accountabilities as detailed in this document. These should be reflected in the School Health and Safety Policy Statement; • Consider and implement arrangements required as a consequence of new legislation, which has implications for educational establishments as advised by the Council; • Participation in health and safety and fire safety training courses for School Governors; • Nomination of a Governor with specific responsibility for Health and Safety support the Headteacher in the preparation of an annual Health and Safety Report to the governing body;

<p>provide advice and guidance as necessary;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will encourage schools to work in clusters and networks to share Health and Safety expertise and to minimise duplication of effort as part of its commitment to support a self-improving school system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst the number of decisions taken on health and safety matters has increased with local management, the ultimate responsibility for health and safety rests with the local authority; • Governing bodies must comply insofar as it is within their power to do so, with the Councils Policy on Health and Safety; • Ensure that appropriate health and safety considerations are managed when procuring services from other companies/ organisations; • Governing bodies will seek opportunities to work in clusters to share Health and Safety expertise and knowledge; • Consult with Employee Safety Representatives; • Before opting out of Service Level Agreements with the LA any potential risks should be considered and a plan put in place to manage such risks; • When directly employing maintenance contractors the school as the client must ensure they comply with the Construction Design and Management Regulations;
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7. Communication and Consultation Arrangements.

This section sets out the regular meetings hosted by the Council, to which Governors, Headteachers or their representatives are invited. For all groups requiring representatives from different sectors or clusters, the Council will seek nominations for representatives through the primary and secondary Headteacher meetings.

Where possible, the Council will ensure that meetings are either at the beginning or the end of the working day so that there is the least disruption for schools.

Corporate Director of Education meetings with Headteachers

Half-termly meetings will be held with Headteachers to discuss emerging issues, progress and to consult on new policies and strategies. Additionally, the meetings will share identified good practice within Blaenau Gwent, new information such as developments in teaching and learning, new legislation, Welsh Government guidance, new policy/ procedures affecting schools, presentations from Council advisers and officers or other Council staff (e.g. Finance) on appropriate topics. The meetings will have a particular focus on measures which will support school self-improvement and capacity building consistent with the Directorate's purpose vision statement. These meetings will usually last a half day.

Membership

All Maintained Schools in Blaenau Gwent (Headteacher or their representatives) Council representation will be through the Corporate Director of Education and all members of the Directorate Management Team. As appropriate, additional advisers and corporate officers will be invited depending on the topics to be covered.

Procedures :

- All meetings will be formally set with dates for the academic year,
- An agenda will be set following consultation and circulated 5 days before the meeting,
- Formal apologies for absence will be recorded,
- Items for inclusion on the agenda should be forwarded to the Director's Office,
- The Corporate Director of Education will chair meetings,
- Formal minutes will be taken and will be shared within 5 days of the meeting,
- Headteacher representation will be expected at these meetings, although each Headteacher may delegate to their senior management team members as appropriate. Where schools are unable to be represented the Corporate Director will be advised so that alternative arrangement for briefings can be put into place. Attendance and representation by every school will be key to ensure good levels of communication and positive engagement in the further development of Blaenau Gwent's education services,
- Where subgroups are established these will report back to Headteacher meetings on their work.

Schools Budget Forum

The Schools Forum (Wales) Regulation 2003 required each Council to establish a Schools Budget Forum. The Schools Budget Forum is key to developing informed and confident dialogue between the Council and schools on budgetary issues, including schools' funding level for the coming year, pressures on future years'

budgets, changes to local funding formula and reviewing contracts/service level agreements to schools.

Forums have been set up to represent the views of schools and other interested bodies, on the Council's schools' budget and other matters related to school funding. The Forum is a consultative and advisory body, and not a decision making one.

The Council's School Budget Forum shall comprise of 16 members, of which not more than 4 must be non-school members. School members must include a proportionate number of representatives of community schools, foundation school and voluntary schools and at least one must be a representative of a special school.

Non-school members currently include a representative from Unison and a representative from the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon.

The Forum meets at least once a term and the Forum constitution, agenda, minutes and papers are available on request. The views of the budget forum will be presented to Council as part of the budget setting process.

Admission Forum

The Education (Admission Forums) (Wales) Regulations (2003) required the Council to establish an Admission Forum. The role and function of the Forum is to consider, discuss, monitor and consult on: policy, procedural development and support the Council in taking key decisions in line with the development and delivery of the admissions process within Blaenau Gwent.

The membership of the Admission Forum is shown below:-

GROUP	RANGE	NUMBER	NOMINATOR
Members or Officers of the Authority	1-5	5	Authority
Members nominated by Church in Wales	1-3	1	Diocesan Authority
Members nominated By R.C Church	1-3	1	Diocesan Authority
Headteacher or Governor (not C.C appointed governors from each school group)	1-3 from each group (i) C, CP and VC (ii) VA (iii) Foundation	C & CP – 3 VA- 2 VC – 0 Foundation - 1	Authority via Headteacher Groups
Parent Governor	1-3	1	Parent Governors (Governors Association)
Community Governor	1-3	1	Community Governors (Governors Association)

The Council shall appoint a secretary, who is not a member, for the Council's School Admission Forum.

The Secretary shall circulate the agenda and documents relevant to the meeting to members. This will be done via Democratic Services.

Each member shall be appointed for a period not exceeding four years. Members may be re-appointed.

Removal of Members

Individuals shall cease to be members of the Admission Forum when they cease to hold the office by virtue of which they became eligible for appointment.

Forum members nominated by a diocesan authority shall cease to be members if their nominating body notifies the secretary of the Forum that they are of the opinion that the member should no longer be a member of the Forum.

The removal of members shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Education (Admission Forums) (Wales) Regulation 2003.

Meetings of the Admission Forum

The Forum is required by the Regulations to meet at least twice a year or as required.

Additional meetings may be called by the Secretary in consultation with the Chair.

At least five working days' notice of a meeting of the Forum shall be given in writing to members, except in the case of an emergency.

The Secretary shall circulate the agenda and documents relevant to the meeting to members at least seven days prior to the meeting of the Forum.

The quorum of the Forum shall be 40% of its membership, rounded up to the nearest whole number.

Members of the forum have no individual role with respect to the application of the admission policy and are bound by the corporate nature of the Forum i.e. they cannot act on an individual basis.

Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

The Chair shall preside over meetings of the Forum. The Forum shall select a Chair and Vice-Chair at their first meeting and biennially thereafter. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall serve for a period of two years and may be re-selected.

The Secretary to the Forum shall act as Chair for that part of the meeting during which the Chair is elected.

Other meetings likely to involve Schools

School representatives are also invited to attend a number of other groups. The requirements for task and finish groups and other sub-groups may be revised during the course of this partnership agreement in response to national and local policy developments.

Groups currently include:

- People, Places and Partnership Scrutiny Committees
- Blaenau Gwent School Governors Association
- Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
- ALN Panel
- Vulnerable Learner Panel
- ALNCO Forum
- ALNCO Cluster Groups
- Leader of Resource Bases
- Designated Safeguarding Leads
- Youth Engagement and Progression Framework Early Identification Reviews
- Post 16 Partnership Board
- Education JCC Trade Union
- Strategic HR Group (includes Directorate Health and Safety consultation and wellbeing)
- Safer Schools Partnership Board
- Headteacher Working Group
- Recovery and Renewal Working Group

Communication with Schools from the Council

Formal papers, e.g. new policies

- No education policy change will be made without first going through formal consultation with schools, Council staff and where appropriate wider council services, other agencies and voluntary groups. However, employment policies which are commended to governing bodies for adoption are subject to a different consultation process.
- A copy will be sent to the school email address via the Directorate's Weekly Bulletin
- A further copy will be , shared with Governor Support for timely onward distribution to Governing bodies.

Full public consultation documents

In many cases, it will be appropriate for a policy document to have been worked up in a small group or working party and shared at the appropriate Headteacher meeting before being considered a suitable draft for wider and formal consultation.

- Copies will be emailed to the Chair of Governors and Headteacher of each school
- The formal consultation group for public documents will automatically include the following circulation list:
 - Chairs of Governors
 - Headteachers
 - Recognised Trade Unions representing education based staff
 - SAC
 - The local Roman Catholic and Church of Wales Archdiocesan Offices
 - South East Wales Directors of Education
 - CLT
 - Learning Theme Group
 - Raising Aspirations Group
 - Youth Forum

- Chair of Blaenau Gwent's Governors Association
- South Wales Race Equality Council (SWREC)
- EAS
- And to any other relevant group as and when required

Changes to policies that involve parents directly (such as the Council Admission policy, Home to School Transport Policy and School Attendance policy) will be published on the Council's internet site for the period of the consultation

Formal consultation with children and young people will be encouraged. This will be facilitated on relevant documents through school councils, youth service and the youth forum.

At the close of the consultation period a summary concluding statistical and formal analysis will be included in the covering report to the final policy document. This evidence will be used to inform final policy or decision-making processes.

Policy adoption

The usual process for policy adoption is as follows:

- Draft policy shared with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors and or any working group,
- Draft policy considered at Education's Directorate Management Team,
- Draft policy shared with Corporate Leadership Team,
- Draft policy scrutiny at the People and Partnership Scrutiny Committee as appropriate,
- Policy endorsement from the Executive Committee,
- Policy distributed to SEW EAS Governor support function for inclusion in school governing bodies agendas for consideration of adoption. Policy adoption confirmed to EAS Governor Support who in turn update Education Directorate on a termly basis.

Written, email and telephone correspondence with schools

Council and schools can always expect professional correspondence from each other. A weekly Schools Bulletin will capture the majority of Council communication to all schools. In addition to this, the Safeguarding In Education Manager will share a Safeguarding bulletin with schools on at least a half termly basis.

Council Staff Visits to Schools

- Will usually be pre-arranged formally by telephone or email/letter and will always be prearranged if staff observation in schools is the purpose,
- Will be formally recorded either as a record or report of the visit and the outcomes or actions required being noted or a formal letter will follow which outlines these points,
- Subsequent action required by the Council staff and the relevant information or update will be provided to the school in writing within 10 working days.

Monitoring of statutory functions

As more statutory responsibilities are delegated to schools, the Council is required to fulfil a monitoring role and will request that schools submit returns within specified timeframes to a nominated officer for example safeguarding matrix and rights respect equality returns.

Where a school chooses not to use an agreed LA system or platform for data reporting reasons the Governing Body will ensure that the data is provided to the LA in line with the agreed reporting requirements and timeframes.

Formal Complaints

The Council has an agreed compliments and complaints policy. If a compliment or complaint is about a Council issue or about a member of staff, The information can be found here: [Corporate Compliments & Complaints | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Schools have their own Schools Complaints Policy, which is agreed by the respective governing bodies. In essence, complaints should be made to the Headteacher of the relevant school, in the first instance to be deal with in accordance with the school’s complaint policy, and subsequently escalated to the Chair of Governors if required. A complainant may request the Corporate Director of Education or relevant Diocesan authority to review the procedure used to reach a decision. However, the Corporate Director of Education or relevant Diocesan authority may not review the decision itself or act as an appeal mechanism.

Public Relations

The Council receives numerous press enquiries daily. It is the role of the Communications team within the council to monitor and manage all enquiries regarding council services. However, Headteachers take responsibility for responding to press enquiries relating to their schools but the Council’ Communications team can provide support and guidance to schools on responding to media enquiries and can also help with proactive media coverage.

Senedd Member and Member of Parliament: Visits and Invitations

Governing bodies should notify the Corporate Director of Education of all visits by Assembly Members and Members of Parliament to schools well in advance of the visit. The Corporate Director of Education will notify the relevant personnel within the Council of the proposed visit so that appropriate protocol may be implemented.

Responsibilities for Communication and Consultation

COUNCIL	GOVERNING BODY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Corporate Director will produce a programme of regular Headteacher meetings; • The School Budget Forum will meet termly. The views of the forum will be presented to council as part of the annual budget setting process; • The Schools Admission Forum will meet twice yearly as a minimum; • Proposed Education Policy changes will be circulated to schools for comment; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider and respond to Council policy consultation documents; • Seek to develop cluster based consultation responses and where possible, cluster based implementation arrangements; • Ensure professionalism in contacts with the Council; • Wherever possible, seek to agree proposed visits and make the necessary arrangements for access to required resources, staff or pupils;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cluster based responses from schools or networks of Governors will be encouraged; • Policy proposals will be circulated where they are part of a public consultation process; • Consultation responses will be reported and considered before decisions are taken; • Ensure professionalism in contact with schools; • Wherever practicable provide written or telephone notice or school visits; • Ensure that monitoring visits to schools by EAS staff working on behalf of the Council are prearranged and purposed explained; • Offer PR support to schools with local issues where needed; • Advise schools on arrangements for visits by Assembly Members and MP's and in particular of their obligations during pre-election periods; • Produce and circulate regular updates on Education developments locally and nationally; • Produce a weekly Schools Bulletin for all school; • Issue a weekly Corporate Managing Director message to all schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek Council advice and support where necessary in dealing with school-based issues; • Notify the Corporate Director of Education any issue which is likely to generate adverse publicity or public interest; • Consider and follow Council guidelines in response to Visits by S.M's and MP's; • Comply with the statutory requirements of pre-election period as detailed in advice from the Council; • Receive and present to Governing Body meetings regular information and updates provided by the Council or EAS.
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8. Revision of Partnership Agreement

This Partnership Agreement is for the period September 2022 to August 2025 with a review commencing in September 2024. The Council reserves the right to provide further updates through an Addendum during the lifetime of this agreement.

The regulations relevant to partnership agreements stipulate the circumstances when a review of agreements may be triggered. These are:

- If a school goes into special measures or the need for significant improvements are identified by inspection;
- The Council uses its power to appoint additional governors;
- The Minister for Education and Skills directs the closure of a school;
- Statutory proposals are made and come into effect leading to:
- Changes to the National Model for school improvement in Wales
- Amalgamations
- Changes to ALN provision
- Alterations from single sex education to co-education or vice versa
- Change of language medium of the school
- Introduction of language medium to the school
- Introduction or ending of boarding provision
- Where a Council makes, or minister approves school reorganisation proposals which could mean the establishment, alteration or discontinuance of schools
- If the Council uses its power to suspend the governing body's right to a delegated budget;
- Where consistent and upheld complaints by stakeholders are made against the school.

Where a review is triggered under any of the above circumstances, the Council will complete the review within 6 months and revise the partnership agreement if necessary. A review may therefore lead to:

- No change
- Amendment of the agreement or statement
- Replacement with a new agreement or statement
- The Council drawing up a statement if the school did not agree to changes to an agreement.

When reviewing an agreement due to one of the circumstances listed above, if another circumstance comes to light, this circumstance will be reviewed together with the first circumstance. The Council and school will then have one year from the date of the second circumstance occurring to carry out the review. If during this year, a third or more circumstances occur, the Council and school would have one year from the date of the later circumstance to carry out the review. If following a review, no change is made to the agreement; up to four years may elapse after the circumstance which triggered the review took place before the Council and school must review the agreement of statement again.

Appendix 1

Statutory and non-statutory functions of a Partnership Agreement

	Statutory functions	Non-statutory functions
2	<p>Achieving Excellence</p> <p>2.2 Pupil progress targets (currently suspended)</p> <p>2.3 Attendance</p> <p>2.5 Transition from Primary to Secondary</p> <p>2.6 ALN</p>	<p>2.4 Exclusion</p> <p>2.5 Transition for pupils from nursery to primary school</p> <p>2.5 Transition from KS3 to KS4 Youth Engagement and Progression Framework</p>
5.	<p>Monitoring, Challenge, Support and Intervention</p> <p>3.2 Safeguarding</p> <p>5.1 Monitoring, Support, Challenge and Intervention</p> <p>5.2 Factors the LA will take into account in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying schools giving cause for concern Support the LA will offer to schools giving cause for concern, and to prevent them from becoming failing schools Support the LA will provide to schools in special measures, or requiring significant improvement 	<p>Securing Wellbeing</p> <p>3.1 Wellbeing</p> <p>Partnership for Improvement</p> <p>4.1 Improvement</p>
6	<p>Managing Resources</p> <p>6.2 Premises and Buildings</p> <p>6.5 Governing Body Training Support and Reports</p> <p>6.7 Health and Safety</p>	<p>6.3 Providing and maintaining data</p> <p>6.5 Staff development to improve school improvement</p> <p>6.7 Staff appointments, redundancies, complaints and disciplinary matters.</p>